



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

Date: April 15, 2022
To: Falls Church City Council
From: Citizens' Advisory Committee on Transportation
Subject: Lessons Learned from Bike Infrastructure Discussion

On March 17, 2022, nearly 50 people attended a [joint meeting of the CACT and the Environmental Sustainability Council](#) to hear from local transportation professionals about their approaches to installing bike infrastructure. The CACT thanks the members of City Council, the Planning Commission, and other boards and commissions who attended, and the City staff who helped organize and host the event.

These are the most useful takeaways that CACT members learned (paraphrased for brevity):

Will Handsfield, bicycle program specialist, District Department of Transportation

Top lessons learned

- DDOT focuses on creating low-stress bike facilities wherever possible to attract/retain cyclists and meaningfully influence mode share in a positive way.
- Bike lanes make roads safer for drivers and pedestrians, too, by narrowing travel lanes and calming traffic.
- For transportation design, safety should be the first consideration, not vehicle capacity. If a road has a safety problem, fix that without focusing on vehicle capacity.
- Parking gets a lot of attention, but bike lanes have constituents whose needs should be met.
- DDOT plans for low-stress bike facilities that can be used by people ages 8-80.
- Parking spaces are public land, but they are often used for long-term storage of private vehicles, which is privatizing resources that would otherwise be public.
- Parking stops/curb blocks used in parking lot spaces are often laying around from other projects and can make good tactical barriers for separated bike lanes.
- Negotiating bulk purchases of bollards and other equipment within construction procurement contracts can make those purchases more cost-efficient.

More lessons and observations

- For sustainability, the [“food pyramid” for biking and walking](#) should be a vision of the future transportation diet. Currently, it’s the car-centric inverse in many places.
- Focus on safety as top priority in land use discussions. The 4-lane to 3-lane road diet is a great example of reducing conflicts with minimal impact to overall capacity. When looking at the tradeoffs at 10,000 feet vs. street-level, the discussions often change. The number of parking spaces that may need to be removed to finish a bike network may be small overall, but on the street that has the lane, they have a bigger impact. He advocates for refocusing the conversation on safety for all users over storing private vehicles on public right-of-way.
- About 8 miles of new bike facilities are expected to be finished this year.
- Economic development often follows multimodal developments.
- Bike projects range from trails to shared use paths to facilities that utilize excess road space and/or use portions of what were car lanes before.
- Grant Circle NW was a project that started with tactical urbanism techniques and transitioned to more permanent installations with flex posts.
- [“Advisory bike lanes”](#) have been tested as a way for all users to slow down and negotiate with others due to its narrow two-way vehicle configuration in one travel lane that enables vehicles to cross over the lines in low-volume situations.
- In the past, traffic engineers focused on squeezing in more traffic, but some designs cost lives, citing reversible lanes on Connecticut Avenue and Rock Creek Parkway as examples.
- By instituting a “road diet” to include bike lanes, you can often fit the same traffic capacity in a safer, more-inclusive design.
- DDOT has been more focused on bike lane installations, but its maintenance expertise is growing. For 90-95% of days, general maintenance has worked OK. It’s the 5% (mostly snow days) that require more effort, and are working on acquiring equipment to serve facilities with different widths, etc.
- Left turn conflicts can often be mitigated with signal phasing or design. Right turns are also a concern but are generally lower-speed and have better sightlines, which DDOT also focuses on improving wherever possible.

Pat Shepherd, capital projects manager/bikeways coordinator, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Top lessons learned

- Piggybacking on regularly scheduled road resurfacing projects can help economize and expedite bike lane projects.
- Adding bike infrastructure more than tripled number of bike users on a street by manually measuring similar time periods from 2013 to 2018.
- An education program was launched for all road users about new pavement markings that may be unfamiliar.
- Custom 16-foot bike lane dividers improve experience for passengers stepping out of vehicles while lowering chances that a car door will extend into a bike lane.

More lessons and observations

- Looking at the distance between two sidewalks, consider a road diet and the best way to divide up the distance between pedestrians, bikes, motor vehicles, trees, stormwater, etc.
- A 2015 master plan focused on making connections to what was a disjointed bike network.
- Annual bike infrastructure budget has grown from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million.
- Drivers are not accustomed to configurations where the bike lane is between parking spaces and the sidewalk, so custom signage may be needed for such designs.
- Floating bus stops have also been used to keep bikes and buses separated and to improve access for users with a disability.
- Protected bike lane network has grown from 0.3 miles to 4 miles, and MCDOT tries to add to it every year.
- Digital bike counters can help measure impact.
- Neighborhood greenway pilot projects are a good start on low-traffic neighborhood streets.
- You will never please everyone but do your best to safely serve various constituent groups.
- They use a Complete Streets design guide that considers safety, sustainability, vitality, streetscape, and more.
- When exploring options, consider changing motor vehicle traffic from two-way to one-way.

Garrett Hennigan, organizing manager, Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Top lessons learned

- With bike projects, try to connect something or fill a gap in your transportation network. Ask, “What are we trying to solve?”
- Look for ways to build quickly through pilot projects and tactical urbanism and figure out how you can make the infrastructure permanent if it’s a success.
- Start from a blank slate on a street and define priorities around access and safety first, rather than starting negotiations from the existing condition and trying to just squeeze in bike infrastructure on the edges. Is on-street parking critical that street? Or is it an option we’re choosing to include over other priorities?

More lessons and observations

- When you’re piloting a project, identify what you like, what should change, and define what success looks like, and what you should do in the future.
- There’s always a bias against change.
- Don’t commit to concrete in a design unless you have to.
- Don’t think, “Should we add this bike project?” Instead think: “How should we add this?”
- Ask maintenance crews to take care of bike lanes too, not just motor vehicle lanes.

CC:

City Manager’s Office, CPEDS, DPW, EDA, Recreation & Parks, ESC, Police Department, OCOM, FCCPS Transportation, VPIS, CBC, Chamber of Commerce, and Bike Falls Church